



# Scoop

Dec. 19, 2003

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### December

22-23 Skeleton holidays.  
24-26 Full-closure holidays.

### January

1 Full-closure holiday.  
2 Skeleton holiday.  
20 Annual MSRDP meeting, 4-6 p.m.  
open to all MSRDP membership, MSB  
3.001.

## UTMost Interest

**Dr. Jeffrey Katz**, president, medical staff, Memorial Hermann Hospital, recently announced that **Dr. Samia Khalil**, Department of Anesthesiology, and **Dr. Francisco Fuentes**, Department of Internal Medicine, have been named the Memorial Hermann Hospital Distinguished Physicians. Each year, members who have demonstrated true leadership abilities and dedication to Memorial Hermann Hospital have been added to the list of outstanding physicians...**Dr. Austin Stack**, Department of Internal Medicine, recently chaired a session on cardiovascular risk factors, diet, and the metabolic syndrome at the annual scientific meeting of the American Heart Association, Orlando, Fla.

Due to the upcoming holidays, there will be no *Scoop* Dec. 26 and Jan. 2. *Scoop* will resume publishing Fri., Jan. 9.

## NEW NIKAI DOH AWARD

The Hitoshi Nikaidoh Memorial Endowment, administered by St. Joseph Hospital Foundation, will provide an annual award to one or more third- or fourth-year medical students, residents, and physicians in their first five years of practice. Applicants for the award should provide a statement or their candidacy by **March 1, 2004**. For more information, contact John Greer, St. Joseph Hospital Foundation, PO Box 1919, Houston, TX 77251-1919, or call 713-756-5205.

## HEIDELBERGER SPENT FORMATIVE YEARS WITH NOBEL WINNER

The announcement of this year's Nobel Prize winners had special meaning for **Dr. Ruth Heidelberg, M.D., Ph.D.**, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy. Heidelberg worked for four years as an undergraduate research assistant for **Dr. Paul Lauterbur**, who won this year's Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology. Heidelberg worked with him in the early 1980s – before there were any MRI machines in hospitals. “We did all our work on a homemade system in the basement of the chemistry building at The State University of New York at Stony Brook,” Heidelberg said. “I was a co-author on several abstracts and one paper from his lab; I have several mementos from those days.” A recent addition to Heidelberg's collection is a letter that Lauterbur sent her three years ago after seeing one of her publications.



**Dr. Ruth Heidelberg (r.), in earlier days at Stony Brook.**

Heidelberg's undergraduate research and thesis project on paramagnetic contrast agents in magnetic resonance imaging led to a Sigma Xi Award for Excellence in Research, an Emerson Award for Outstanding Junior, and an Honors Degree in Chemistry.

She joined the faculty here at the Medical School as an assistant professor in 1996. Her laboratory studies the mechanisms of neurotransmission using the vertebrate retina as a model system. “A lot of what we do is considered membrane biophysics, and it was in Paul's lab that I first learned how powerful it can be to apply physical principles to the study of biological problems.”

Heidelberg completed her undergraduate work with honors in chemistry at Stony Brook, where she also earned a Ph.D. and received her medical degree. She completed her postdoctoral training at The Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Goettingen, Germany with Nobel laureate Erwin Neher.

- C. O'Brien

## ELAINE ALLBRITTON, DECEMBER EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

**Elaine Allbritton** is bright, capable, college-degreed, and a boon to the office of Continuing Medical Education, says her supervisor, **Suzanne Taylor**. She came to the Medical School in August 2002 and holds the title of CME Conference Coordinator. Elaine is responsible for coordinating physician education courses. “Elaine is extremely precise in her job duties and brings to the job excellent organizational and time management skills. She developed a meeting implementation timeline for program directors that is detailed and invaluable,” Taylor said. This tool has facilitated increased communication between program directors and the office. In addition, Elaine keeps the office abreast of the latest changes to individual programs and is proactive in minimizing any potential challenges. Elaine also is happily anticipating the birth of her daughter, Peyton, due Jan. 30. Outside of work, Elaine enjoys “playing with my 22-month-old, Kylie.”



**Elaine Allbritton**

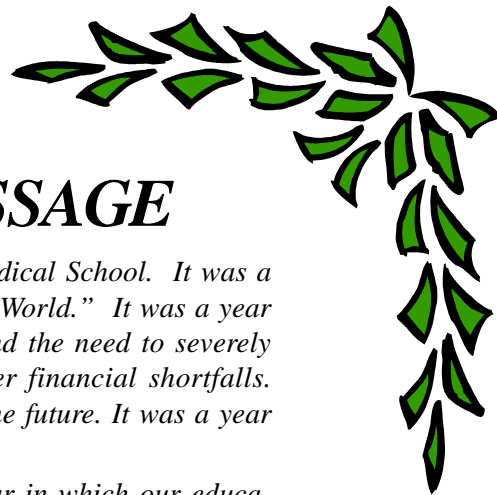
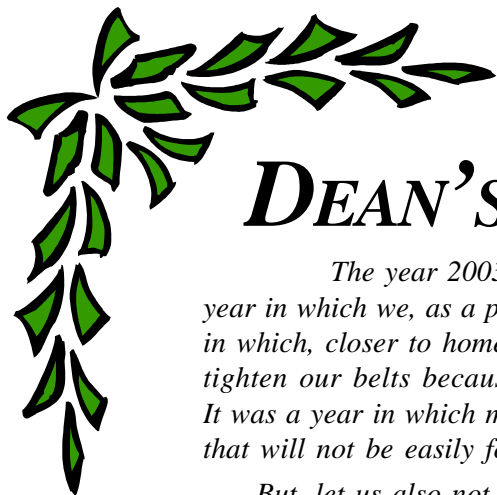


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## DEAN'S HOLIDAY MESSAGE

*The year 2003 was a difficult one for all of us at the Medical School. It was a year in which we, as a people, continued to cope with a "Post 9/11 World." It was a year in which, closer to home, we witnessed a painful reorganization and the need to severely tighten our belts because of state-mandated budget cuts and other financial shortfalls. It was a year in which many were unsettled and concerned about the future. It was a year that will not be easily forgotten.*

*But, let us also not forget the bright side. 2003 was also a year in which our educational and research activities — our core missions — continued to overcome all of the lingering obstacles of Tropical Storm Allison and flourish; our students are doing better than ever; and our research dollars continue to grow! 2003 was the year in which — thanks to the successful efforts of President Willerson — we received funds from the state Legislature sufficient to rebuild our flood-ravaged medical school into something that will be magnificent, functionally and artistically, as well as build a new research facility that is desperately needed to further our mission of discovery. 2003 was also the year in which our financial status turned the corner and now appears to have a bright outlook.*

*We have much to look forward to in 2004!*

*I am often asked why I took on the challenge of being interim dean. Heaven knows I didn't need it! The answer is — as corny as it may sound — that during the 25 years that I've served this school, I've grown to love it and the people I work with. This is my home away from home. I have a vested interest and personal pride in its past and in its future. I am excited about what lies ahead for this school and vow to do everything within my power to help shape it into the best it can possibly be. But, for this vision to be realized, I will need your help and I wholeheartedly invite your continued service and dedication. I know I can count on you.*

*Finally, this is a very special time of the year. It is a time when all of us should take inventory of ourselves, examine our priorities, and reaffirm those special values that give meaning to our lives and those of our loved ones. My wife, Harriet, and I extend our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy 2004.*

**Stanley G. Schultz, M.D.**  
**Interim Dean**

### FACULTY WIVES HELP ALUMNI AFFAIRS DISTRIBUTE HOLIDAY CHEER



*In the spirit of the holiday season, members from among the Organization of Faculty Wives & Women Faculty gathered this week to stuff goodies into dozens of bags to be distributed for those Medical School students studying for exams on Burn Out Night Dec. 18.*